

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

**Please cancel claims 1-5, without prejudice.**

**Please add the following new claims 6-17 to read as follows:**

6. (New) An image processing apparatus including a storing meansunit for storing image data and performing an output process based on the image data stored in the storing meansunit, comprising a controller including:

means for designating the image data stored in the storing meansunit, and accepting an instruction for concealment of the designated image data, means for concealing the designated image data based on the accepted instruction, and means for nullifying unconcealed image data.

7. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the controller further comprises:

means for detecting whether or not a processing meansunit for processing the image data is provided and an operation state thereof, and means for determining a concealing method based on detected results.

8. (New) An image processing apparatus including a storing meansunit for storing image data and performing an output operation based on the image data stored in the storing meansunit, comprising a controller including:

means for designating the image data stored in the storing meansunit, and accepting an instruction for concealment of the designated image data, means for detecting whether or not a processing meansunit for processing the image data is provided and an operation state thereof, means for determining a concealing method based on detected results, and means for concealing the designated image data by means of the determined method based on the accepted instruction.

9.(New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein  
the concealing method is encrypting the image data, and  
the controller includes  
means for decoding encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation  
based on the image data.

10. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein  
the concealing method is setting of authentication information encrypting to the image  
data,  
the controller further comprises:  
means for accepting authentication information;  
means for verifying the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted  
authentication information; and  
means for permitting the output process of the image data in the case where the  
authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted  
authentication information, and  
the controller decodes encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation  
based on the image data.

11. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein  
the concealing method is encrypting the image data, and  
the controller  
decodes encrypted image data in the case of performing an output operation based on the  
image data.

12. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein  
the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and  
the controller  
accepts authentication information,  
verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted  
authentication information, and  
permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication  
information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication  
information.

13. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein  
the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and  
the controller  
accepts authentication information,  
verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted  
authentication information, and  
permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication  
information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication  
information.

14. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein  
the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and  
the controller  
accepts authentication information,  
verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted  
authentication information, and  
permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication  
information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication  
information.

15. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 9, wherein
  - the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and
  - the controller
  - accepts authentication information,
  - verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information, and
  - permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.
  
16. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein
  - the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and
  - the controller
  - accepts authentication information,
  - verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted authentication information, and
  - permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication information.

17. (New) The image processing apparatus according to claim 11, wherein  
the concealing method is setting of authentication information to the image data, and  
the controller  
accepts authentication information,  
verifies the authentication information set to the image data with the accepted  
authentication information, and  
permits the output process of the image data in the case where the authentication  
information set to the image data matches the accepted authentication  
information.